

# AN ANTHOLOGY



CAMBRIDGESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL  
FOR GIRLS

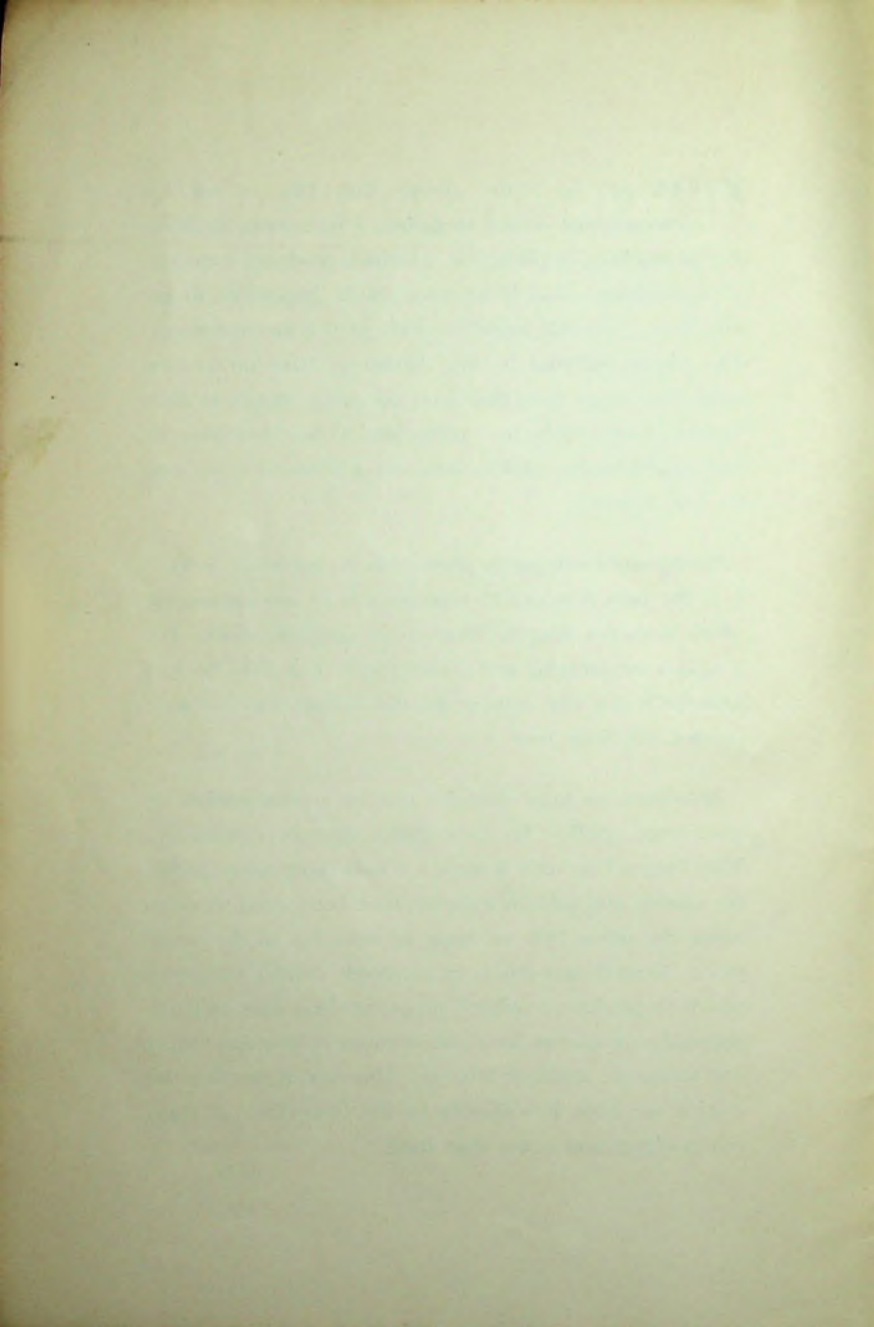
JULY 1956

**T**HERE are so many things that this is not—a conventional school magazine, a representative selection of anything in particular, a lavishly produced memento of an occasion—that it becomes almost impossible to say what it *is*. First and foremost, perhaps, it is an experiment. The pieces included in this Anthology have no uniting theme but range from first form adventure stories to sixth form animadversions on various topics; but they have all been experiments, explorations and adventures in writing for the authors.

Seeing one's writing in print gives an agreeable shock—it is the only mechanical reproduction of our personality which does not give an intensely disagreeable shock—but it is also encouraging and consequently profitable. So it is principally for our own profit and delight that we have printed this little book.

Moreover, we hope that this may be a pilot edition for many more to follow. We have printed this very economically. The Parent-Teacher's Association have generously backed the scheme and half the expenses have been voted by them, while the other half we hope to meet out of the actual price. Nevertheless this is an extremely slender budget on which to produce a printed magazine these days and consequently we cannot have the beauties of printing, paper and layout we aspire to later on. However, if you like this edition we hope it will only be the forerunner of many others bigger and better than itself.

K.U.



# PEOPLE AND PLACES

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SCENE BY A RIVER BANK

JANICE BENTON, IVIAI

IT was a wet, dismal day. Not the right day for comfort while fishing. Trying to make the best of it, I settled down under a tree and flung in my line. The float sank down and then shot up, bobbing as the raindrops hit it.

An hour later found me in the same position. I had no luck. At last I spun in my line and put my rod up. I decided to look about me, as this river was a new one to me.

To my left small hawthorn bushes were dripping raindrops on to the scrubby grass below them. A few dry, withered berries, still clung to the boughs, swaying with the weight of the rain.

Behind the bushes the bank rose steeply to a wire fence, behind which a horse stood, its head rubbing up and down on the wire. Its attention was suddenly diverted from the rubbing as a man climbed over the fence and slithered down the bank. I watched him put his rod together, saw his annoyance as his wet fingers slipped on the gentils he had just picked up. His eyes never strayed from the float, which drifted slowly into the swim and stopped.

I turned away and saw three swans, gliding swiftly along the water, their proud heads bent as if to look at their own reflections. They passed me and went on, under the mellow, lichen-covered bridge, disappearing into the cool shadow of its side. The swans were followed by a crowd of ducks which hurried along, picking up anything they wanted and often fighting. They disturbed a moorhen, and it uttered its peculiar, sharp cry as it flew to safety among some rushes. I saw its bobbing head going to and fro, then it hopped into the rushes, and only an occasional quiver disclosed its hiding place.

Suddenly a motor boat came speeding along, shattering the peaceful quiet, honking noisily to be let through the lock-gates which were further upstream. The lock-keeper hurried out, his head bent against the rain, and started to push the great, creaking gates back, back, and with a splash and a surge the water burst in, white and seething. Slowly the level in the lock crept up, covering the shine on the walls, then the chains, and then it was full. The motor boat was let out, and soon all was quiet again, with only the steady drip of the rain through the trees.



I cast out my line again, watching the ripples on the water as the float went out; they reached some lily pads and they ducked under like ballerinas taking a bow. As they were bobbing under, the rain stopped and, after a while, the sun came out, transforming everything to a pale gold. As if they sensed a difference, the swans came gliding back, the sun gleaming in the drops on their wing-feathers.

A splash and a grunt disturbed my thought, I turned to see that the man had caught a fine bream; the sun glistened on its scales as he swung the fish to the bank. It wriggled and flapped, but was helpless in his practised hands. The man placed the fish in his keep-net and resumed his seat.

Wishing that I had caught something, I packed my rod and climbed up the now steaming bank and turned to go home, but I was glad it had been wet as I had seen so much beauty by that river.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FILM STARRES TALE

KAREN MOTT

**A** FILME starre there was and he a handsome wighte  
Of false teethe he hadde a mouthful brighte,  
And curly hair hadde he, and that full black  
And parted full on top and down the back,  
His eyen blue shone clear as turquoise skye  
Full many a laughing maid had he made crye  
His dimpled cheek full saucily he used  
To woo his friends, the which were oft abused.  
Of talle stature was he, a well built manne  
And broade of shoulder with a lovely tanne.  
He knew the arts of lovemaking full wellle  
And often times had heard ye wedding belle  
But from this state he had escaped, I wis,  
He loved all and paid with but a kiss.  
An actor he, but loth to act a part  
Which gave him naught but honour for his art.  
Rich was this manne, with goods and chattelles blessed  
But peace he knew not whereby taxmen pressed.  
At gala nights and eek at film premières  
He strode and strutted showing well his airs  
Which training, face and fortune luck endowed  
This youthful god to whom the millions bowed.  
Full soft he spake and with a husky voice  
Would say, "I love you", making hearts rejoice  
And girls all, who heard the deep request  
Would yearn, and sigh and swoon at his behest.  
His clothes too he wore with great disdain  
As if to dress so well gave him great pain:

His tye was gaudy, bright with wonderous hues  
 And on his feet he wore brass studded shoes,  
 Which threaded were with laces thick and strong,  
 And so set fashion for the fan-mad throng.  
 His hose were nylon and of saffron bright,  
 A kerchief from his shoulders floated light  
 He wore his hat fair at a rakish angle  
 And on his wrist a golden watch did jangle.  
 He was a guy who could be plenty tough,  
 In early youth he'd starved and lived quite rough,  
 For raised was he in London's Olde East End  
 And knew no things save but to make and mend  
 But now he lives with folk of high degree  
 And blushes not when meeting royalty.  
 But of this manne ye know enough I trowe,  
 Ring up the curtain ! Rod will make his bow.

#### A ROOM

GLENYS PICKERING, IIa1

**A**LTHOUGH I had never seen her, I felt instinctively the kind of person she was, before I had been in her room for three minutes. As I walked in through the door, the warmth of a log fire met me. The walls of the room were decorated with fawn wallpaper, with bunches of pink rosebuds. The paint was cream, and the decorations gave a light, bright, cosy air to the room. One wall was occupied by a bookcase of books which were well looked after, and one glance along the shelves made me laugh, as the titles were both interesting and amusing. The chairs were arranged round the fire, and, when I sat in any one of them, I felt as if I was sitting on air, and if I closed my eyes I think I could very easily have slept. It was the middle of Winter, but a few leaves and some Jasmine had been found to make a charming decoration.

As the door opened a little lady appeared whom I need not describe, as the room does it for me very well.

#### SECOND IMPRESSIONS OF SNOWDON

BRONWEN ROWLANDS, IVa2

**I**T was a cold damp morning with a sea mist just blowing away. The day was August the twelfth and the place was Bull Bay, Anglesey. The family were packing climbing gear into the boot of the car. There was an air of excitement as the family bustled to and fro. We were going to climb Snowdon, and this time we were really going to get to the top and walk every foot of the way.

We left about ten past eight. The journey was uneventful and we reached Llanberis at ten o'clock, where we met our friends Ion and Anna Mary Grove-White.

Mummy and my sister Ceridwen were going up by train so we parted company. The rest of us unpacked the boot leaving only the raincoats behind. We all carried a thick jersey, a windcheater and an extra pair of socks. We left the car park at half past ten.

Our route took us through the village and we eventually placed our feet on Snowdon at ten past eleven. After the first gate we stopped and pulled on our extra pair of socks. We walked in single file with Anna Mary leading, then Daddy, Helen (my Canadian friend), myself, Ion and Gruffydd (my brother) bringing up the rear. We walked with a steady pace. There was a gate ahead but nobody ran to open it, we opened it when we got there. The first thousand feet rose very steeply, when we had climbed these we had a wonderful view of the mountain railway winding its way up the mountain-side. The next half mile was easy walking with more wonderful views on either side of the track. We didn't stop to admire them because we had been told that we could stop on the way down. After this half mile the ground under our feet had changed from grass to mud, often we had to step over, and even jump over mountain streams. Soon we came to the bridge which marked the mile, we sat down on the cool stones in the shade. The sun had risen quite high now and it was getting hot, so we were thankful to sit down in the shade of the bridge, we all felt like asking for a drink but we knew we could have one at the half-way house. We set off after about ten minutes' rest.

The ground under our feet had changed again, this time it was very spongy grass which made walking difficult, we were walking slower now and we had more time to absorb the views, some of the most wonderful in the world, of the Snowdon range, the mountains were grey, sinister and foreboding, rising majestically out of the clouds, like a King dominating his Kingdom. We continued on our way, we passed the two mile mark and knew we only had another half mile to go to reach the half-way house. We climbed steadily on, that half mile seemed to be the longest I have ever walked, the ground was rising steeply and we were tired, but we pushed steadily on. When we reached the half-way house we flopped onto the benches outside and relaxed. None of us had talked and no-one was talking now, everyone was occupied with his own thoughts. I will always remember thinking, "John Hunt followed this route when he first climbed Snowdon, and we are now, so I really am following in his footsteps". Daddy brought us



all a cup of tea. I thought he must have been crazy, but he explained that tea was more refreshing as we were hot, Daddy also said that we had covered the easiest part of the journey and the worst was to come, and we were not to be too shy to ask for a rest. When we had finished our tea we were ready to get going again. We climbed on getting higher and higher. Far below us was a mountain lake with the sun glinting on its rippling waters, which looked very green. It all looked so very peaceful, still we climbed on, the sun was beating down and we were nearly baked alive. We suddenly found ourselves walking on slate, it was the most difficult thing we had walked on. The way was getting steeper and steeper, and I was getting more and more tired; everyone was plodding on with the same monotonous rhythm of left right, left right. Our walking was hindered because the slate was loose and for every two steps one took one slipped back one, we pressed on gradually higher and higher. Above us was a grassy plateau and this was our goal (for this stretch of the climb). Anna Mary was nearly there. We climbed on getting nearer and nearer. I felt like asking for a rest but as the plateau was so near I just climbed on. Anna Mary had got there, now Daddy had, then Helen, then I scrambled on and we waited for Ion and Gruffyd to come. We just stood and looked around. Below was grass, cool and inviting, above the way was barren and unfriendly. Daddy was telling us that from now on we were to keep our windcheaters on, he also told us that we would be walking on grass no longer. We got up and donned our windcheaters and pressed on again. The ground was still slate and we walked on the best we could. The ground was not rising much and we could see ahead, there was another bridge, we could hear a rushing noise, like wind. We thought nothing of it. Anna Mary was the first under the bridge and immediately her hair was whipped around her face and she was struggling to get to the other side of the bridge quickly. We all went through this and when we reached the other side we were greeted by a nasty gust of wind. We walked over to the edge of the rocks and sat down, there was a wonderful view all round. The Llanberis Pass was far below us with tiny cars crawling along it. The houses and animals looked like miniatures. The mountains looked green and friendly where the sun caught them, but in the shadows they looked as if they had many deaths to their names. It was extremely windy now and Daddy was explaining why; before we had been walking round the sheltered side of a shoulder now we were simply on the other side; why it was so windy under the bridge was that all the winds from this side were trying to get through a very narrow gap, and if one stood



under the centre of the bridge it would be perfectly calm, and if we wanted to we could try on the way down. We got up and continued on our way, still walking in single file. The stones beneath us had changed again and were shale. We were always looking up and once when I glanced up I happened to see two people waving at us, I just waved back and thought nothing more of it and walked on. We climbed on with the same steady pace. We were beside the railway track now and we asked Daddy if we could walk along it, but the answer was a very definite no, Daddy said that we would be walking the two hundred yards along the track and it would be very tiring because the sleepers were not evenly spaced. The lake was now the size of a sixpence. The two climbers who had waved before were waving now. Then Daddy realised who they were, they were Mummy and Ceri, but what were they doing walking?

With this question ringing in our minds we pressed on quicker to give it an answer. We knew that we were getting higher because the sun shone no longer. We pushed on with the same pace which never altered. I was getting tired again and was going to pluck up my courage and ask for a rest when Daddy told us to stop and have a quick rest. Daddy told us that we only had about three-quarters of a mile to go and we would be at the top. We got up and moved off. I was very thirsty now, and I nearly asked for a drink, but I knew I could not have one so I just licked my lips and pressed on. We had not been walking long when we met Mummy and Ceri. We couldn't go quickly because Ceri would hold Mummy's hand. We had an explanation of why they were walking. The engine driver had said that it was too windy along the Clogwyn, and it was too dangerous. So Mummy and Ceri had got out and decided to get to the top by walking.

We were all thirsty, hungry, and tired, we were all very cold outside (my hands were frozen) and very hot inside.

We could now see the hotel at the top and it was with joyful steps we climbed the last two hundred yards of our journey along the railway line. (The clouds were very low and thick around the station). We walked along the platform of the miniature station and on to the rocks at the summit. My first thoughts were that I had done it, I was very pleased with myself. The summit itself was out of the clouds, we were lucky to be at the summit when the clouds were thin.

We sat down in the shelter of the rocks and pulled our thicker jerseys on. We ate dinner amidst a loud discussion about the route up. The wind was very strong so as we looked over the edge we had to be sure to hold onto something. Below us and on the left was the Pen-y-Pas route

which we took two years ago. We could just see part of the pass with its endless stream of traffic crawling along it. After this we laid a stone on the cairn. The time was now, exactly half past one—actually we reached the top at quarter to one.

We then descended and went into the shop part of the hotel. I asked one of the assistants how long it usually took an experienced climber to climb up the Llanberis way. She said that an experienced climber would take about two hours and an inexperienced one about three and a half hours, so we didn't do too badly. I bought some "Mint Cake", a queer mixture, rather like toffee, chocolate, and peppermint all mixed up together. The Everest climbers took lots of it up Everest. I also bought some postcards which were stamped on the back saying I had climbed Snowdon.

We left the shop about quarter to two and stood outside on the platform and were told the names of the surrounding mountains. It seemed funny that two hours ago we were looking up at this wonderful horse-shoe of mountains and now we were looking down on it. Gruffyd told us that the journey down would be far more tiring. So Daddy said that we could take it at our own paces.

The clouds had lifted completely now and there were some lovely views. We saw the place where we had sat down, it was right on the edge of a precipice! With a thousand foot drop on the other side!

We followed the same route down. Every time one took a step forward one's knee seemed to slip up. As we were all going our own paces Anna Mary and I only needed two rests. One at Quellyn Bridge and the other at the half-way house. The sun was beating down and we were very hot. We had taken our thick jerseys off as we left the summit. Then at the half-way house we took our wind-cheaters off.

The lower we got the hotter we got and by the time we had reached the bottom we were extremely hot.

I left Anna Mary who wanted to go on ahead and see Ion. As I pushed the last gate open I took my last look at Snowdon, everything ahead looked flat and dull. There was nothing to look forward to now we had climbed Snowdon. I walked on through the village fighting back the tears which were filling my eyes. I was thinking that any minute I would cry when the idea struck me that I would write and tell Catherine and Sheila about the climb.

I walked onto the car and pulled off my shoes and socks and slipped my feet into some cool sandals. By this time the last members of our party had arrived and we all had a drink and some biscuits. We climbed into the car, Anna

Mary and Ion came with us, as we were going to have supper with them. As in the morning the journey was uneventful and we arrived at the Grove-White's about seven o'clock. After a wonderful supper we drove home talking of the day's adventures.

When we arrived home I had a hot bath and wrote my letters sitting up in bed.

## MARKET PLACE

ELIZABETH PROUD, L.VI2

**T**HE Clock in the round-faced town hall facing the market place, strikes six into the early quietness of the little market town. There is a tightness, a constraint about the air, as though the town were tensing itself for something, but on the last vibration of the last note, a black cloud of rooks shoots noisily into the sky from some trees behind the school, and the morning relaxes slightly, stretches itself, the sun becomes a little warmer, and a carpet is shaken vigorously from a window in the "Cat and Bells" across the square, disturbing the geraniums in their window-box.

A lorry drives up and stops, leaving a sudden hush after the noise and clatter of its engine. Men climb down: the back is unhooked and falls with a crash, the chains that fastened it clinking, swaying: long poles and canvas are taken out and fixed together. Slowly the skeleton of a stall appears. Another lorry roars up: more doors slam: more bangs and chinks from the falling back; more canvas and poles—another stall. A low hum of voices: whistling: goods are arranged on trestles: a chambermaid leans out of the window at the "Cat and Bells": the landlord appears at the door, a smell of frying bacon wafting out from behind him; and a thin trickle of blue smoke rises straight and sure to the sky where the rooks still caw and chatter.

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One more bus turns in from the main street and pulls up by the row of shiny monsters already in front of the "Cat and Bells". One more stream of people pours from it to join the mass of swirling, surging humanity, moving like soup simmering in a pan. Women: bags: fathers, dragging staring children: dogs, who chase non-existent cats, or rats, who knows what? And end up in a snatching, snarling, growling fight, then run off after more cats; and the soup simmers after its sudden bubbling.

Ice-cream carts surrounded by children, sucking and staring. Fish stalls, where the fish lie pathetic, translucent, and the women poke and mutter. Gaudy material in rolls on a trestle table; wives with rough hands who finger curtaining. Wall-paper, spotted and striped: china, glazed, dusty, stuck



round with straw. People are clustered like flies, inspecting, touching, haggling, and turning away dissatisfied, or with a parcel in the hands, and a pleased, secret, look on their faces.

Cries of:—"Fresh fish!" and "Oranges, apples, pears; fresh fruit!" echo back from the town hall. Sparrows twitter. Oranges gleam sullenly, southern beauties in a strange setting. Their acid smell and that of the fish flung on the scales with a 'slap-slop', the cry of children and the clink of money commingle with the beery odour and the smell of roast beef from the open door of the "Cat and Bells"—where the landlord is doing a roaring trade—and with the acrid, hot, exhaust pipe, oil and petrol smell from the 'buses, and all rise up together to the cawing rooks.

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The last bus moves off, carrying the last load of weary children, laden parents to their teas and the inspection of their purchases. The last stall is packed into the last lorry and is carried away till next Friday. The market place is left to the wind and to a dog, who sniffs at the paper left on the cobbles. A cat howls in derision. The long shadows fall on the oil patches where the buses stood, on an orange peel, no longer gleaming but dull and dry, robbed of life. The wind lifts the paper, the rubbish left, and whirls it into a rustling, scuttling dance as the quiet of the day returns and the rooks murmur in their sleep.

The door of the "Cat and Bells" is flung open. Light pours out. The 'thud' of a dart in a board, laughter, shouts, warmth, cigarette smoke and beer obscure the deserted market place—until next Friday.

## THE LAND OF THE PREHISTORIC

JULIA PALMER, L.VI2

**I**T was raining and the sky was dark and heavy. Viciously up the valleys blew a sharp wind casting a chill over that area of France. However, even all this could not spoil that first sight we received of the magnificent country-side of Périgord. High on the cliffs we sat, sheltered by the beetling rocks and there we stared, stupified, at the scenery spread out before us. How strange, how different from anything we had hitherto seen and yet how beautiful were those jagged rocks rising naked from the more gentle shrub covered slopes. The valleys, or rather gorges, little altered for twenty thousand years, were wide and long and from where we sat, insignificant position as it was, we could see



for many miles on either side: far up one valley and far down another.

We could see the Vésère flowing swiftly through its avenue of Les Eyies, known the world over as the centre of this prehistoric land. Unspoiled, uncommercialised, in April, yet quietly proud of the distinction it nestles beside the Vésère and against the rocks.

The wind blew sharper: we shivered, drew our coats more tightly round us and gazed on, lost in the beauty. It was peaceful, almost silent . . .

Suddenly a horn honked in, unfortunately, the typically unpleasant French style and as far below us, a modern-looking car swerved recklessly round a bend in the lane we were abruptly jerked back to the present time and its needs. It was already 'post-prandial' so we slung our knap sacks over our shoulders and, retracing our steps, we staggered over the edge of the hillside.

Périgord is the area of France in which the prehistoric caves are situated and it was under such different circumstances that we visited them. We entered 'Fort de Gaume' with a small gnome-like guide who spoke in a strange and barely comprehensible patois. This cave was high up a steep hill slope and on all sides of it was yet another of those insurpassable views.

Through a small, green corrugated-iron door we slipped and as it clanged behind us we advanced along the narrow passage which stretched far before us in a practically straight line and far above us into the territory of the bats. All the floor and about ten feet of the wall was illuminated in such a way that the soft-pink stone showed clearly as it merged upwards into the blackness.

Even small sounds resounded far down the passage and our footsteps grated on the uneven ground. Deeper into the cliff the ceiling was much lower and the stalactites glistened above us. Small caverns branched off intermittently, like alveoli, but we walked straight before us until, several hundred yards into the rocks we saw on the walls above us, beside us, all round us, those famous paintings: bison, cows, deer, horses leapt and bounded across the dusky salmon-pink rock. Carvings too—some clearly depicting animals, others merely a few lines which hardly represented the creatures they were said to.

How strange, how silent it was, far in that cave as we stood admiring those paintings, painted by people who lived twenty thousand years before us.

Under such different circumstances we visited those caves: a number of completely drunk but harmless modern cavemen—for indeed their houses were but caves, showed us round "Les Combarelles", an ancient, scrawny woman

led us into one low, pitch black grotto with her acetylene lamp; and others were comparatively normally conducted tours.

The atmosphere of that area was strange. The hills were bare, some of the valleys marshy, uncultivated and there were many dark woods and although it was lonely and sparsely inhabited it was not formidable, not hostile. Even in such villages as La Mouthe where there were many deserted cottages and an air of a once-prosperous-now-barren region it remained friendly, inviting. Perhaps this is because for so long it has been the home of people who were, anyway at one time, artistic and creative, and always kind and hospitable.

### WHY I LIKE OUR GARDEN

OUR garden is not the usual type of garden. It is not a rambling old-world garden. It is not a garden with grass so green and short that it looks like green velvet, and it is not a garden with flower beds shaped like diamonds and squared patterns. In fact it is not everybody's idea of a garden at all.

There is a path running down one side of the garden, leading from the back door to the back gate (which is nearly coming off its hinges). At one end is a trellis, covered with virginia creeper (which breeds far too many spiders). At the opposite end is a rockery. Behind the rockery is an old, green summer-house that we put our bicycles in. In between the rockery and the trellis is a 'stretch of grass'. I can't call it a lawn because it isn't one. It is mainly composed of weeds, dandelions and daises. Recently we had some alterations done. The workmen mixed the cement on this stretch of grass'. The result was a brown patch of earth. Running along the two fences is a narrow border of flowers.

Growing in our garden in the spring are violets, small primrose plants, some blue and white blue-bells and apple blossom. In the summer there are snap-dragons, phlox and in a corner by the rockery are some tall and stately hollyhocks. The michaelmas daises bloom in the autumn and the virginia creeper, which is turning red, makes a fine display. When winter sends his ice and snow, our garden goes to sleep, to make ready for next year.

Our garden is not very tidy, but despite its untidiness, if it were anything else it would not be the same. If a ball went accidentally on to the flower bed, where it was out of reach, the game of ball would be at a loss. No ! It would not be the same.

## LONELINESS AT SEA IN A ROWING BOAT

JUDITH PIERCE, IIIA2

**N**OW that I was well out at sea, and away from the heat and bedlam of the crowded beach, I knew a feeling of peace for the first time on my holiday.

I shipped my oars and lay back. From my position at the bottom of the boat it was as though I had abruptly entered another world which consisted of sky, clouds and lazily wheeling sea-gulls. The chatter of the holiday-makers on the beach seemed to be drifting vaguely towards me from another, distant world. In this dreamy state I was carried still further out by the receding tide.

A little later I sat up and discovered that I could no longer hear any disturbance from the beach, as I was by now too far away. I was really alone on the restless sea in a tiny rowing-boat. Gazing around, I became suddenly aware of the hugeness of the scene, and of my puny size in comparison. To the right of me were reddish cliffs, that before had seemed so high, and now were like sand-castles in the distance. To my left . . . miles upon miles of misty blue sea. As I looked, I felt smaller and smaller and of less and less importance until I was sure that I had never felt more alone in my life before. Even the cries of the sea-gulls now seemed despairing, and adding to my solitude.

Picking up my oars, I rowed frantically back to the shore, where I lay back, sucking a lurid lollipop, amid a warm and crowded atmosphere.

## A SECOND-HAND SHOP

WENDY INGRAM, IIIA2

**T**HE door of the shop creaked open as I entered the room, and immediately the clanging of a rusty bell met my ears. Suddenly it stopped and all was quiet, except for the faint noise of the rain as it tapped on the dusty window panes.

Looking round, I saw nothing but ugly shapes, rising out of the ground like monuments, for the room was very dark, and the air so full of dust that I could hardly see. Slowly my eyes began to take in my surroundings—that shape over there was a suit of armour, not a ghost, and that one standing there by the door was a pile of thick encyclopaedias.

The musty air made me choke, and I was just wishing I had never entered the shop when a door at the back of the room opened and a little bent man with a night cap on hobbled over to where I stood. He was obviously short

sighted, or perhaps he thought I was a suit of armour because he passed me by, and, mumbling, was just about to go back to his little room when he suddenly saw me.

He eyed me suspiciously for a moment and then asked me what I wanted in a strange, croaking voice. I purchased a little black jewellery box, and after I had paid my money he stumbled off to the room at the back of the shop, brushing past a huge cobweb covered in dust as he did so.

Once again I was left in the dark, musty room, and once again I shuddered at the grotesque shapes which surrounded me. Suddenly, an empty bottle which had been balancing on a shelf fell to the ground with a resounding crash, and it broke into a million pieces on the dusty floor. The silence which followed this seemed eerie and frightening, for even the rain which had been tapping on the window panes had stopped. I walked quickly to the door, and soon found myself standing on the pavement of a busy street.

How different was the noise and bustle of the city to the quiet little shop, with its suits of armour, its dusty books, and its heavy oak chests. I walked down the street, the clamour of the traffic ringing in my ears, but I had only to pass through the door of a dirty little second hand shop and I would be in another world.

#### A DAY ON SKIS

ELIZABETH TAYLOR, IIIA2

**A**T seven o'clock I jumped out of bed. I put on my dressing gown and slippers, and softly opened the door, and went into the passage. I hurried into my parent's room and said that if we were to catch the eight-thirty train, we ought to get up. You may think it funny, to take one-and-a-half-hours over dressing and breakfast, but if you have ever tried to put on Ski-ing clothes and boots, eat your large Swiss breakfast, and get to the station with skins on your Skis, you will know that it is very difficult. Skins used to be strips of animal fur, but now they are usually made of plush. You put them on your skis, with the hairs pointing downhill, and then you can climb straight up hill without falling backwards, provided the slope is not too steep.

After breakfast, we went to the station. We had already put skins on our skis, and Daddy had bought a party ticket the night before, so when the train arrived, we immediately climbed into a compartment, and reserved seats for the rest of our party. At last the party was complete, and the train was off. At Natchen, most of the people in the train collected their skis from the ski truck, and



skied down to Andermatt, but we stayed in the train until it reached Oberale. We put on our skis and started to climb up the mountainside. When we reached the pass, we parted. The less experienced members of the party started skiing down the other side, while we, who were more experienced, continued climbing up to the top of a mountain called Calmot.

When we reached the top we took off our skis and had a rest. When we had rewaxed our skis we set off down the other side, to catch up with others who had gone by the shorter way. By the time we had caught up with them, they had already put on their skins, and started to climb up Val Val, a steep depression in the mountainside. When we reached the top, we had our packed lunches, which had been provided by the hotel. We had a wonderful run in soft snow, down to the restaurant which we reached at half past two. When we reached the restaurant we had drinks, and a rest, before we set out to catch our train home.

The train in which we were all now travelling home jerked to a standstill. A great many heads popped out of the windows. To our surprise, we saw some Swiss men, who obviously came from the village below the line. They all had shovels, and were digging, off the line, a huge pile of snow, which was rapidly increasing in size. Suddenly one of the men climbed over the fence, then sitting down, he slid all the way down the slope to the village. The guard, told us to get back into the train as we had walked along the bank by the fence, to see what was happening. The train began going backwards and soon had passed the place where we had joined it. When we came to a large village, we collected the rotary snow plough. This snow plough went ahead of the train, and all we could see was a huge cloud of snow, as the plough went through the avalanche. By the time we reached the snow plough, it had driven into a side line, so as we passed it we waved and said "thank you" to the drivers. At Natchen we climbed out of the train, and skied down the now icy slopes to Andermatt. We were all glad to lie down on our beds, and have a rest after this exciting day.

# ADVENTURE

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LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI ASHLING RAYNER, IVa2

HER fiery hair was glowing with jewels as she signed the warrant. Her pale face looked strained and she bit her lips with discoloured teeth. Yes . . . she had been beautiful . . . once, but that had gone, time had made sure. She knew . . . she knew, although they told her she was lovelier than when she first reigned. Even Leicester lied. Leicester her favourite, Leicester her lover. She flung down the pen with a jerk.

"Fool," she whispered harshly, "old withered fool; this flatterer ! Can you believe he loves you ? They lie to you even as they plot your death. D e a t h !" She shuddered violently. She was sending another to meet her death even at this moment.

"Mary," the name hung on her lips. "Mary, my cousin, what have I done ? God, what have I done ? What have I done ?"

Terror filled the now dulled green eyes. They had forced her to sign it; she had not known what she was doing. They, they . . . M U R D E R E R S ! They were killing Mary in her name and she had begged for naught but mercy, . . . they were killing Mary as they would kill her.

The woman wrenched at her jewel encrusted gown, a pearl broke away in her hand. She stared at it with unseeing eyes.

"Pearls for tears," she had once said that laughingly to her brother Edward, now she realized how true those words were. A tear rolled down the sunken cheek on to her hand and lay shimmering with the pearl. She gave a hysterical laugh and then leapt to her feet, crashing the chair back. The Archbishop, where was he ? The warrant—he had taken it. Mary—she would be beheaded soon. Her face changed, she must stop it, her eyes glistened.

"Parker !" she cried, "Parker, Parker . . . Parker !" the scream echoed in her ears mockingly and her mouth worked.

"Parker !" her voice broke in its terrorised cry to an ugly cackle. No one answered, no one came. The jewelled hands clutched at the heavy wooden table and the figure sank rigidly into a chair. . . .

The sound of weeping reached her ears . . . silence . . . a stifled sob and a roar of people's cheering voices. She listened a moment and then dropped her head upon her arms, her frail form shook with sobs. How often before had she heard those sounds ! They came back to her from her father's reign. Her mother, the fated Anne Boleyn. Her cries became frenzied and she screamed aloud in agony, "Mary, Mary, forgive me ! Oh God, M A R Y !"

## CAPTAIN FAGGOT'S CLOCK

PENNY KALDOR, II A 1

**I** PRESSED the present into Captain Faggot's hand. "It's for you, I brought it from the sea-side," I said.

He unwrapped the sea-shell and his eyes brightened as he placed it to his ear. "Thank you m'dear," and then as an after thought he said "Ah ! There's nothing like the sea !"

"Tell me about the sea and why you left it ?" I asked.

"It would be better if I showed it to you, and besides, my pride wouldn't let me tell you. Well, in those days we had to work, we had no clocks, except the captain had one."

He pushed his polished clock, which stood on the mantel-piece, on to the floor and it broke into a thousand pieces.

"But, I thought you were the Captain, and why did you smash the clock ?" I interrupted.

"Are you showing this story or am I ?" Captain Faggot said angrily.

"You are," I said hurriedly.

He took a dustpan and brush and started sweeping up the pieces of the clock, as he did so his voice rumbled on. I was beginning to think that I was getting rather cold and also slightly wet when I looked around and, instead of Captain Faggot's neat little cabin-like parlour, I saw that I was sitting on a rail of the deck of a ship. Behind me was the sea, spraying over the rails. On the deck were a few men wearing blue overalls and dusting the deck with old-fashioned dustpans and brushes.

"Get on with your work, and who may you be ?" the speaker turned to me.

Thinking I must be in some dream I answered, "A friend of Captain Faggot."

"Don't be daft ! There isn't a Captain Faggot. There is only Faggot; he's going to be sacked when this load gets back to England. He can't even scrub the decks. You can't try that trick on me. Oh yes," he eyed me suspiciously. "There was a chap like you who was here a few weeks ago, and who said he had been shipwrecked. Captain took

pity on him, and said he could be a cabin-boy. The next thing we knew, he had stabbed one of the sailors to death."

"What did you do then?" I asked.

"We made him stand on the rail. Then we shot him, and he fell backwards into the sea. And I think you may end that way. Here, come along with me to the Captain's office." He marched me along to the Captain's office. It was a neat simple cabin. The only ornament was a polished clock which stood on the mantelpiece. I had a vague feeling that I had seen it before.

Suddenly I felt the ship going down! Slowly the water conquered the ship, and then I could not stand. The sailors shouted "The ship is sinking, we can't swim all the way to England. What about our goods, our goods?"

Then, just as I was beginning to give up hope, I felt a strong arm underneath my body guiding me through the water. In his hand he held the polished clock.

"Thank you!" I gasped.

"Not at all, always a pleasure to show one the story. I feel a bit ashamed myself as if I have let down the sea. Although all the sailors were drowned, except me, I dismissed myself from the sea. My friends call me Captain, a sort of nickname, I suppose."

I gave a jump, Captain Faggot was tipping the pieces of the clock into the wastepaper basket.

"I don't understand why my frock is wet as if I had been swimming, and why you had to smash the clock," I said impatiently.

"You would be very clever if you did understand, and as for the clock," he smiled, "well, that's my secret!"

Still wondering I walked slowly home.

## ON BOTTLES AND BROOMS

JULIA PALMER, VI<sup>2</sup>

**R**USH hour on the Paris metro is not the ideal time to carry the sort and quantity of luggage which we had. It was a little easier on the boat-train, when we could spread out over a larger area, and better still in the ship across the channel but we began to wonder why we had ever considered bringing the various extra objects all the way from Perigord to England when we entered the Custom's sheds.

It was, however, the amusement, mingled with some horror, we felt at watching a large party of Cypriots having their luggage unpacked which really made us forget our own.

At first we merely noticed one or two rather garishly



dressed, obviously Mediterranean people firmly denying anything to declare. A second look from the Custom's officer caused him to click open their several suitcases. From among innocent under-clothes a bottle of superior Cypriot wine; another; a bottle of superior Cypriot whisky, rum, more wine. A second case: a similar store; a third case: and so on. Soon the bench was crowded with bottles and yet only two men's luggage had been inspected. Behind them about twenty more Cypriots, all with bursting suitcases and 'No, nothing to declare.'

At last we were asked to pass on to the next bench and when the question 'Anything to declare?' was put to us, our reply was: 'Well, a few trinkets and we have brought a broom,' as we produced the Balai Superieur de Perigeux, the long sweet smelling broom used by all French peasants in Perigord, 'and also a little one'. The officer nonchalantly chalked on our rucksack, 'Can I interest you in a vacuum cleaner?' he said.

#### THE FLYING BEDSTEAD

CATHERINE BICKNELL, III

**I**T was no good! I just couldn't get to sleep. I gazed out of my window at the dark night. The pear tree scraped against my window pane. Its eerie noise made me feel uneasy, although the sky beyond its branches looked calm and still. The brilliant stars looked like tiny holes in a great dark blanket, the sky, and beyond all this was the moon. It looked hazy and mysterious; it seemed to resemble my silver bedknobs that stood out so vividly in the moonlight. There was something so beautiful yet weird about the still night. I pushed back my covers, and crawled over my soft eiderdown to the end of my bed. I gave one of the bedknobs a rub with my pyjama sleeve as it looked slightly tarnished. I felt a queer sensation in the tips of my fingers, and slowly it went all over me. It was as if I was enveloped in a rather prickly woollen garment. My bed seemed to shiver then to lurch, I clutched the bedknob to steady myself, the bed continued its lurching as if it were trying to leave the floor. Suddenly it succeeded in doing so and with a mighty heave bumped clumsily through the open side of the window. I was too surprised to notice how it had gone through such a narrow space. Its legs crashed through the branches of the pear tree scattering leaves in all directions. As soon as it began to gain height the motion became smoother, and by the time it had left the village behind it actually began to glide. "The flying bedstead", I thought to myself. This thought alarmed

me so I tried to think of something different. I had a look over the side of the bed. Already the earth looked like a great relief map stretched out beneath me.

I felt cold and scared so I hopped back into bed and pulled the covers up round my neck to keep warm. In doing so my pillow fell over the edge. Desperately I tried to catch it, but in vain, I lay watching it, with a sickening sensation as it went down, down, into the darkness. Suddenly my bed began to lose height and to follow the pillow, and in no time at all I had recaptured my pillow and put it firmly under my arm. My bed began to regain height and speed rapidly. The wind rushed past my ears. I found it hard to keep the covers on. I began to enjoy the sensation of flying through the air, but was horrified to find the earth just looking like a dark lumpy ball below me, and that my bed was heading straight for the moon. A sudden wave of panic came over me. How was I ever going to return? A singing noise began in my ears and the sky became a very dark crimson colour around me; clouds of yellow dust, and blue smoke passed beneath. Suddenly all this cleared and the singing stopped, my hands were wet with perspiration and all my feeling seemed to be numbed. I hit my bedknob and felt nothing, but as I did so the bed seemed to lose control and to bump up and down. I peeped over the edge and saw the moon was now immediately below me and the bed was rushing down towards it. Great transparent globes passed me on both sides. They were like enormous, beautiful soap bubbles, I grasped out to catch one: it slipped past my hand leaving it wet and slimy. Large, green weed-like plants came up at me. One landed on my bed with a contented purring sound. I recoiled when I saw it was alive with rather angry looking red slugs. Plucking up courage, I stretched my hand out to feel it. Just as I did so the bed gave an extra large jolt and the green object slithered off: all the slugs ticked as if they objected strongly. Cold and shivering with fright I looked over the side of my bed, and to my horror I saw that the bed was heading straight for a huge crater. I could see nothing else except cold, wet mist. It formed a kind of skin on my bed of tiny particles of water that danced about as the bed jerked from side to side. Great forms and faces kept on appearing below me. Faster, and faster, the bed fell; now I could see the most terrific creature waiting to catch me with outstretched arms looming out of the mist emerging from the crater. Suddenly, I was in his reach; long skinny fingers clutched me, digging into my sides. I caught a glimpse of a small gnarled twitching face; the deep-set greasy eyes seemed to pierce right through me; he resembled a rather nasty kind of ape with

an enormous lower jaw and large rather yellow teeth. Terrified, I struck out. My hand struck something soft and everything closed in on me. I sat up with a start, I found I had struck my pillow and I could hear the familiar sound of the pear tree scraping against my window pane, and there beyond the stars was the moon looking misty and mysterious.

## MY WONDERFUL EASTER HOLIDAY

DRUSILLA DEAN, 12

**WE** were going in the usual taxi to the railway station. As usual, the taxi man asked how "the doctor" was. Usually we just said "Very well, thank you", but today we said "You'll know when we come back from our holidays. We're going to Uganda to see him!"

When we arrived at King's Cross we went on a bus to the air terminus at Waterloo and then on another bus to go to the airport. I did not like this bus ride and I felt rather sick when we got there. To get into the airport you have to go down a tunnel. When we came out of the tunnel the bus stopped. We got out and went to an enormous restaurant where we had something to eat and looked out of the window at all the aeroplanes coming and going. Then we went to the place where the stewardess was waiting to take us to the plane. We went through a lot of glass passages and then got into the plane. As soon as everyone had got in, the plane started. The towns that we stopped at on the way were Rome, Cairo and Khartoum. The whole journey only took thirty-six hours. It was mostly during the night.

When we arrived at Entebbe my father was waiting for us in his car. We went through a thick forest and ran over snakes, which my father is quite used to because he has been in Uganda five years now. When we came to Kampala, which is where he lives, we found that it was a rather untidy-looking place. In the market place there were pineapples on the footpaths. When we arrived at the flat where Daddy lives it looked like an ordinary flat in England.

The next day we went to Lake Victoria. You cannot swim here, unless you want to be eaten by a crocodile or a hippopotamus. I doubt if anyone would. But it is very good for sailing. Daddy has a sailing boat and so we went for a sail. We saw a few bubbles which told us that we were near hippos and a few logs which probably were really crocodiles.

After we had been on the lake we went to hospital where black babies who have Kwashiorkor are treated. Daddy

thinks that they get this disease because they eat too many bananas. When the black babies are very small they are bouncy and perfectly all right, but when they begin to toddle they get very whiney and ill. They look rather awful when they are in hospital because their skin peels off.

The next day Daddy and I went out for a ride in the car to see the pigmies. We took a photograph of them. They were obviously used to having their photographs taken and were very pleased.

Nearly all the Africans in Kampala have bicycles and carry all their luggage on top of their heads while they are cycling. All the women have very brightly coloured clothes which look very beautiful.

It was very hot, although it was nearly the rainy season, and we had to get into the shade as much as possible.

We came home after a fortnight, having had the best holiday anyone could wish for.



# ANIMALS

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## CATS

SUSAN COWELL, II

**I** LIKE cats for many reasons. I like their dainty walk, so gentle and neat; their ability to walk on crowded surfaces without disturbing anything. I like the way they crouch, every muscle tense, before springing onto their prey. I admire cats for their wonderful sense of balance which enables them to walk on extremely narrow fences. I like to see them running, their tails waving in the air, upright, as if they were using them as aerials. I love to watch the playful antics of young kittens, running after their mother, pulling at her tail, clambering all over her, until she gives them a sound boxing on the ears, sits on them and gives them a gentle but thorough washing.

I like the charming way cats have of trying to persuade a seated person that their lap is the best place for any cat. The habit cats have of choosing the only sunny spot in the room to sit in amuses me. My two cats have a habit which also amuses me. They sit together in front of the fire. First Posy will wash Paddy and then Paddy will wash Posy. Suddenly, one of them will strike out and they will roll over and over together. I like the way cats have of running towards you, when you come home, as if you have been away for years.

I admire the cat's intelligence and his way of sensing when anyone comes into the house, and immediately starting up with his ears alert. As a proof of the cat's intelligence, which is denied by some people, there is this story. The cat concerned belongs to my grandmother. In my grandmother's garden, a pair of blackbirds had built a nest. My grandmother took great care that no harm should come to the baby birds and was always looking for them. The cat seemed to realise this and one day he brought and dropped into my grandmother's hands one of the young birds. It was unharmed and flew away merrily when my grandmother opened her hands.

There are many more reasons why I like cats, but these are the most important.

MY PET AVERSION—  
SPIDERS

MARY MCGREGOR, IVAS

■T is half past eight on a wintry night,  
I open my bedroom door,  
Switch on my bedroom light,  
Climbing up the wall,  
A Spider !

Ugly ghastly black thing,  
Crawling up the wall,  
With beady eyes and hairy legs,  
I hate you most of all.

Open the drawer and take out a handkerchief,  
Flip at the thing on the wall,  
But does it move from its comfortable corner ?  
Not at all !

I flip again with indignation  
"Out of my room go ! go !"  
But it lingers on as if to say  
"No ! No !"

Yet again do I fly at the ghastly thing  
Which inhabits my room,  
It drops on the floor and, so I think,  
To its doom.

I get into bed and close my eyes  
Then open them again  
The spider has climbed the ceiling  
And resumed his reign.

I get out of bed and find the handkerchief,  
Flip at the hairy thing,  
It runs around the bedroom ceiling  
In a ring.

At last I catch him in my hands,  
Open the window wide,  
Now I have caught this horrid thing

I fling him outside.  
Then I return to my cosy bed  
And go to sleep,  
But even into my best dreams  
The spider can creep.

## "I'VE A RIGHT TO SAY"

SUSAN WARD, 113

**I**'VE a right to say in my feline way,  
That humans have no idea, how a cat should be treated,  
And comfortably seated in his own big arm chair to stay.

But all they do is turn you out,  
In the cold when the snow lies deep,  
And your nose feels cold and paws do freeze,  
And you feel cold throughout.

I've a right to say and I hope you agree,  
That cats should be carefully treated,  
And given a good drop of milk every day,  
And, of course, most comfortably seated.

## TICKLES IN THE NIGHT

SHEILA WEDD, 13

**I** WAS hot and sticky. The bedclothes were half on the floor and my pillow was at such an angle that not even I could put it straight again. I could not sleep. I tossed and turned, but no, I was to be awake for the rest of the night.

A few minutes went by and like magic I went peacefully off into a slight dose. But not for long for I was awakened by a horrid eerie noise, like an army of beetles at battle. I could not stand it and I dived right under the bed-clothes trembling. What was this that had come to haunt me? Was it a human? No never. Could it be an animal? May be.

All these thoughts raced through my head, and made me feel worse and worse. After a while my courage came back to me and I cautiously came back to the top of the bed. Not a sound was to be heard, only the distant cry of an owl and the leaves on the trees rustling in the gentle breeze. Then something happened. Something tickled my nose and moved about my hair. I was scared stiff and my blood nearly froze within me. I hid myself in the blankets, hardly daring to breath. "I must tell Mummy" I thought to myself. But I soon found out that things are easier said than done for again the same tickling came, this time on my ear. This put me off for some minutes but after telling myself again and again that I must not be a coward I forced myself to go.

First one foot then the other reached the floor. Then my whole body stood up and half running, half walking I made my way to the door.

At the door the noise came again and then I was tickled all the way up my leg. I was panic stricken and shivering,

I just managed to open the door. I fled across the landing at top speed and into Mummy's room. Mummy was awake and got quite a fright when I burst into the room.

"Mummy," I cried breathlessly. "Noises and tickling in my room."

"What do you mean? Whatever's the matter," she replied, quite taken back.

"In my room," I answered. "Something tickled me and I heard noises."

"I'll come and see", said Mummy putting on her dressing gown. "I suppose you were only dreaming."

"I'm sure I wasn't," I replied.

Mummy switched the landing light on and walked over to my bedroom door. She opened it and the light was switched on. Nothing could be seen, until I went right into the room. Then I saw what had been the tickling and the noises. Three lovely, fat, black spiders were making a large web over my bed. One was hanging on a long thread just above my pillow. I felt as if I could fade away under the floorboards. I was so ashamed of myself. Fancy being afraid of a spider at the age of eleven. I wished I had never been born.

"Well," said Mummy. "Fancy being afraid of three harmless spiders, not to mention that one just over the door. Now get to bed and don't get me up again after a spider, because I won't listen to you at all. Be quick! It's seven o'clock already."

My word! I felt a proper fool when the next morning Daddy asked Mummy why she had got up in the night. I could not bear to listen any longer, so I went upstairs with a large feather brush, and every spider in the room was out of the window within ten seconds. It had taught me a lesson and now I always look before I make a fuss.

## I HAVE A VISITOR

P. HAYES, IIIA1

**L**AST Christmas, when the snow lay thick on the ground, and the sky looked grey and heavy, I chanced to see little robin lying on, a log in the snow. He was more dead than alive. His feathers were stiff with cold, his eyes were shut and he was sprinkled all over with snow. I would not have noticed him had I not been collecting wood for my mother. I wrapped the little bird in one of my fur gloves, the warmth of which seemed to revive him a bit, and hurried home as fast as I could with him in my pocket. There was not much my mother could do for him except to put him in front of the fire to "thaw out". We gave him little pieces of fried bacon and bread to eat together with a little warm water to drink and by the next day he



was quite alright again. Then mother said I must let him go. I was very sad at this and when he flew out of the door, I never thought that I should see him again. You can imagine my surprise therefore when he came for food the next morning with a bunch of cheeky sparrows. Mother and I christened him Sammy, for no real reason at all, and he became quite a "regular". He came every day in the cold season, and in the Spring, and he built a nest, and when they had hatched and the little birds could fly, Sammy left us. I have seen many robins this year, but I have no means of telling if one is Sammy. I wonder, when the frosts begin and food is scarce, I wonder, if I will ever see little Sammy again.

## THE MOUNTAIN LION

JUDITH PIERCE, II<sup>A2</sup>

**T**HE great shoulder of rock overhanging the herd of wild horses was outlined in gold against the rising sun. The sky slowly changed from black to dark blue, and from dark blue to sapphire. The tiny, fleecy clouds in the west were pale pink from the rosy glow of the dawn. A slight breeze stirred the lush prairie grass. The leader of the herd, a large bay stallion, sniffed the air and snorted. A yearling, now fully awake, bucked and crow-hopped round his indifferent mother. One or two very small foals heaved themselves off the ground and tottered around, shaking their cottony manes and ridiculous flaps of tails. At last the herd was on the move.

One of the yearlings, more inquisitive than the others, began to move away from the rest of the herd. His movements were watched by a tawny shape that glided out from under a rock overhanging a steep track leading down to where the yearling frisked. The lioness curled back her lips in a snarl, revealing her glistening white fangs. She moved forward, her supple body scarcely moving, her tail twitching, so that the black tuft on the end waved to and fro. She was now on a rock that stuck out over where the adventurous yearling was heading. She crouched down, waiting. The yearling moved closer and closer. The lioness flexed her muscles, ready to spring.

A sudden noise, like the rattling of a pebble in a tin, rent the morning. Some instinct in the young horse made him retreat rapidly a good five yards away from the rock, where he stood, trembling, snorting apprehensively. The lioness, fearing that her prey would yet escape, sprang wildly, landing near the yearling, which squealed in terror, and, turning rapidly, bolted back to the herd. His mother greeted him with a nicker and a nip, while the lioness retreated to her lair.

# GHOSTS, FACTS AND FANCIES

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## WHY I LIKE CACTI

SUSAN BIRD, III

**M**Y liking for these exotic plants started last Christmas. My Aunt and Uncle gave me a garden with five cacti in it, and from then on I have kept about 20 cacti, buying them from the market, exchanging seedlings with others, and selling some.

It is great fun to sit and watch their grotesque features, some prickly, some smooth, some with three-sided leaves, but I think that best of all I like a succulent which I have recently received: it is about a foot across and is a trailing plant. It has three-sided leaves and is very beautiful.

It is wonderful when you have some money to spare to go down to the shops and choose a cactus—whether you end up at home with a six inch one or a half inch one, you know that it will be fun to look after.

I like propagating them too, because with each different species there is a different way of propagation. From some you extract leaves; other you cut in half and plant; and the more common ones grow their own babies and these you extract and put in a pot.

This is why I like cacti, and I think their beauty, when in flower, is fascinating. They are always green, and flower at Christmas or thereabouts, and in the growing season. They are cheerful, rewarding plants and I like them very much.

## NOISES HEARD AT NIGHT

ELIZABETH PROUD

### SILENCE

It is late and the very light  
In my room  
Seems to hum  
It is so bright  
And loud.

Silence  
The clock ticks in time  
Water drips dead  
In the tank over-head  
The church bells chime  
Carefully.

Silence  
Suddenly nearby  
The geese  
Cackle and hiss  
A train rumbles by  
Far away.  
Silence.

## THE OLD PATCHWORK QUILT

JUDITH EVANS

**T**HE old patchwork quilt on Grandmother's bed,  
Can a wealth of stories unfold.  
Of the time of Grandmother's far off youth  
And the wonderful days of old.  
That brave brocade was a crinoline gown,  
That satin a petticoat fine.  
She wore that silk as a bridesmaid gay,  
And the damask, the colour of wine,  
Made a beautiful dress she wore at the ball  
When she and Grandpapa met.  
Can you wonder her gaze lingers tenderly there,  
Can she help a little regret  
For the wonderful days when she was a belle  
With all the world at her feet?  
E'en now when all those pleasures are gone,  
The patches bring memories sweet.

## THE GHOST

P. SADLER, IVA2

**I** WAS staying with my great-aunt who is an eccentric old lady who lives in an extremely old house. This house is situated near a small spinney, where there was once a gibbet.

One evening, just before I was going up to my bedroom, my aunt called me to her room.

"I have got something to tell you, Penelope, dear", said she in a very serious tone. "Tonight is Midsummer's Eve, as you know, and tonight is the night when the ghost walks". My aunt looked so serious that I nearly laughed at her.

"What ghost do you mean, great-aunt?" I inquired.

"The ghost of Herbert Jones, the robber. He walks through the spinney and into this house every Midsummer's Eve."

That night I went to bed, not, as you may suppose, thinking about the ghost, because I thought that it was just one of my aunt's stories which she often imagined had

really happened. Slowly I dropped off to sleep; suddenly something woke me up. I looked at my watch—five to twelve—what was it at this time of the night? I listened all was still—only the rustling of the trees could be heard.

Suddenly I heard a cough, a deep rasping cough; I stiffened with fright. Suddenly I thought of my aunt's story—could it have been true? Before I could think properly I heard a steady footstep outside my window. I peeped outside and there, silhouetted against the sky, stood an old bent man. Could it be the ghost of the robber Herbert Jones? Slowly the old man lifted his head towards the house: he had a long white beard and an old sack over his shoulder. I was scared stiff—what could I do? Suppose he came into the house? I flung myself back into bed, putting my head under the bedclothes.

"Get off!" I cried, then, as I opened my eyes, I realized it was my aunt who was bending over me.

"You have overslept, Penelope, dear," she said kindly. Suddenly I remembered what had happened in the night.

"Did you see the ghost, Aunt?" I inquired.

"What ghost?"

#### WHY I LIKE DAYDREAMING      RUTH SHEPPARD, II3

**A**LTHOUGH I try hard not to day-dream during lessons, I often find it quite difficult, especially when a hockey match is going on outside or when a train goes by.

I like day-dreaming because it is such an effortless pastime. I find it very easy to start day-dreaming when I am in front of a fire and am in a comfortable chair. It often takes me a long time to do my homework, because I can't think of anything to write, so I lift my pen and start to think about things other than what I should be thinking of. When I day-dream, I am completely 'dead' to the world. I might look up at the clock and start listening to the ticking, while I am fidgeting with my hair but all my mind does it to go 'tick tock, tick tock'. My eyes may wander restlessly about and perhaps start counting the bricks in the fireplace, but my mind keeps going, 'tick tock, tick tock' all the while. Sometimes my mind may go a complete blank, while my eyes wander aimlessly around the room. Or, yet again, my mind may go back to my summer holidays and I can see the short, very springy grass, and feel the soft stream water with the mountains as a background, all green and brown in North Wales, where I spent a week. This last sentence may not make sense, but I was imagining that scene, as I wrote and others as well.



**I**T has a great fascination for me to know that I have actually climbed the said-to-be-impossible climbing tree. To feel oneself above the ground in those swaying branches is a feeling unknown to those who have not had such an experience. The thin branches quaver and tremble with my weight, but still hold firm, as I daringly look down to the ground so far below. The trunk sways and I at once lift my eyes from the ground for fear of falling.

The children gather below me, pointing with excited fingers to the top of the tree calling their friends to come and look. Their faint, faraway cries reach me and make me realise that perhaps I should not have climbed so confidently into the heights above the roofs of the nearby houses. The view is wonderful; the fields and paths show out so clearly with the smoke winding its way up and up from the chimneys. Up in the tree I feel I could not have drawn a better picture from anywhere else than in my tree-top.

When I return home, my clothes, dirty, ragged and torn, make me want to hide from the presence of my mother. I do hide and change my clothes, but the scratches on my bare legs and arms and the dirt on my red, breathless face betray me. Now I am in for trouble. A long, dreary curtain lecture is about to be pressed into me by my angry mother (who is not really angry, but anxious that I should not climb any more trees). After my mother has finished lecturing me, I decide to run out of the house and hide in the branches of my favourite apple-tree.

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